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THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC.

Notwithstanding the acclaim of mental superiority, which the old National Academy arrogates to itself, it remains to be said, that the first good impression of its seventy-fifth exhibition is not sustained on closer inspection. It is a result of borrowed finery, the finery of surroundings—borrowed from the erstwhile hated rival the Fine Arts Society.

The unusual view of seeing the old show in decent surroundings and in proper light inspires one at first glance to exult in an apparent improvement, but, alas! the denouement of close inspection. There is less bad work—because there are fewer pictures, that's all. I learn that many pictures, submitted to the critical ordeal have been rejected by the condemning fiat of the jury, but how they could have given *pratique*, without disinfection, to much that has been hung warrants the usual murmurings against favoritism, injustice, prejudice, want of discernment and what not. And although I may sit with Machiavellian spirit, watching those secret broils, quietly enjoying the commotion, I would still moralize on the academic doings. The act of rejection may have been justified, in one or two cases I know it was not, but I heartily wish, without harshness, that the exclusion could have been more drastic. The example of Boston should be followed and the exempt rule be abolished. Then every tub could stand on its own bottom, and much that is to the agony of soul could have been spared.

Why pillory names of those that know not how to paint cattle, though birches may be fair; that make a work look like a solid piece of plate glass, green because of its density, not for its molecular components. There are those that are *passés*, others have never arrived. Doleful is the result.

Redeeming features there are, indeed. Irving R. Wiles, Arthur Parton, Howe, Wiggins, Bogert, Couse, Ochtman, Curran, Schreyvogel, Harry Eaton and a few others have sent in good work. The "Ox Team," by Potthast, is vigorous and reaches out. Homer Lee's "Election Night" is in a vein but few attempt successfully. Weir's "November Landscape" is good, if skied, but why admit—

It is unnecessary to proceed.

In painting one may sacrifice something to exhibition effect. But no artist who depicts nature as she is, with unaffected grace, with that elegant simplicity with which she was portrayed of old, need fear to be thought deficient in fire and spirit. Nature, the immortal goddess, is not a vain coquette to be wooed by flattery to win her smiles; with genuine feeling approached, with personal love and personal inspiration, her presentment will give the highest satisfaction. Very little of this is shown. We must await with solicitude the American Artists' Exhibition a few months hence.

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So much is being said about finding original old masters one never heard of, that I like to call attention to one which seems to be lost. In Cotton's life of Sir Joshua Reynolds there is mention made of a portrait painted by Reynolds of Mrs. Barrington as St. Cecilia. This painting, many-years ago, was sold in London for 600 guineas, and was sent to America, and all trace of it was lost. It must be here somewhere. Will some one find it?

"The Triumph of Religion," by Rubens, a reproduction of which appears on the front page, is one of the symbolic compositions which the Flemish master affected. It came in the possession of Dr. Reuling from the Von Abegg collection, and shows the Madonna sitting on a lion; beneath sits St. John holding the symbols of the faith. St. Sebastian, St. Catharine with the wheel, St. Barbara with lilies, St. Peter, St. Paul, are grouped about, while Pope Gregorius IX. is kneeling. The color is rich, but the drawing of the lion rather poor, showing the early period of the painter, as does the portrait of the artist's first wife, Catherine Brandt, who represents the Madonna. Originally this canvas served as an altar-piece in a private chapel. The City of Frankfort endeavored to buy this picture some hundred years ago, while Professor Cornelius, Director of the Pinakothek, claimed that the drawing of the heavy gold-embroidered cloak of the Pope is better than that of Pope Sixtus in the Sistine Madonna.

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The photogravure supplement inserted in this number is a reproduction of the magnificent canvas by Sir Thomas Lawrence, "The Daughters of Lord Londonderry," which is one of the gems of the Catolina Lambert Collection, a description of which is found on another page.

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The claim often made in these columns of the existence of a distinctively American school of painting is now endorsed by Benjamin Constant, the distinguished French painter, who in a recent interview thus expressed himself:

"In the last decade American inventiveness, joined to a natural seriousness, has produced a school of art that may be called thoroughly American. The fact is revealed in the American work hung at almost any of the annual salons of recent years, and I expect to see it especially emphasized in this year's exposition."

American artists, and these include painters, sculptors, illustrators and designers, are forging to the front with distinctively individual characteristics. The only ones lacking these individual national characteristics are the deserters, like Ridgway Knight, Bridgman and those of the same class, and a very few imitative workers on this side, through whose products the foreign estimate of the American school has been one of pitying condescension, and the recognition of its true merit long delayed.

In this connection it is to be regretted, if reports are true, that London will soon be told what American art stands for—in an untrue and deceptive way. I am informed that the English house of Arthur Tooth & Son intends to introduce the work of H. W. Ranger to England as that of a representative American artist. This house, which does not seem to have the courage to stand by its own countrymen, as but few English pictures are ever seen in its galleries, also shows a further lack of judgment in this selection. Almost any one of "The Twelve Landscape Painters" that showed their work last

spring would be more representative American. Our English cousins must get a very poor idea of our originality, although they may praise the mechanical dexterity of our school representative who is to be presented to them.

The exhibition at the Tooth Galleries, now running, bears me out in this estimate of Mr. Ranger's work. There are beautifully wrought counterfeits (mostly copies of last year's compositions) of Rousseau, Diaz, Jacob Maris, Frits Thaulow, his latest acquisition, but not yet the Courbet marine which he promised last spring. There is not a single canvas stamped with individuality. The future will show that Ranger's place in American art is the one occupied in Paris by Paul Vernon, who is the idol of greengrocers, haberdashers, the small bourgeoisie, who cannot afford to buy a Diaz, so purchase the work of the man who aped him best. His canvases will be neither fish, flesh nor fowl, not to be tolerated among Barbizon pictures, nor worthy to be in a respectable American collection.

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Another matter which I have frequently advocated during the past year has been municipal and governmental patronage of the fine arts. A strong endorsement comes now in the proposition of Controller Bird S. Coler, who wants to give the Municipal Art Commission a yearly appropriation of \$50,000 to be used for the purchase of pictures and sculptures and the offering of prizes. This is the practical accomplishment of my contention, and may the bill which the Controller is preparing be passed with a hurrah.

* * *

Success in the artistic world is not always striven for by legitimate means. The fickle goddess with her auriferous favors is not always wooed by energetic merit or the demonstration of superior excellences—there are press agents. Milk-baths and stolen diamonds, divorces and automobile races may be the purlieus of the tooting heralds for another artistic branch, there are also the gentry of great invention who ensnare artists to follow a short-cut to plethoric pocket-books—by what means, leave that to the wily space writer. And artists themselves, invariably conscious of incompetency, seek by certain slick ways to pave the way for sales which would not come by other means.

Dealers are not so apt to go outside of legitimate advertising after the experience, a few years ago, of one of the prominent Fifth avenue houses. It will be remembered that this house employed a newspaper woman of hysterical yellow-journal tendencies as press agent for a foreign portrait painter. The unenviable notoriety in which this woman plunged the house has had to be lived down.

Artists are not so careful, and they should be warned to look for recognition by the stern and rugged way of *hard work*, and not be scheming, toadying and wire-pulling. I remember just now the case of one man whose limit is mechanical dexterity, which is beyond cavil, who has a perfect system of screwed-up prices. Only last Sunday at the Lotos club a check for \$700 passed for a to-be-reported \$1,500 picture. Another one boasted that he was a principal stockholder in an art journal in which he had inserted a fulsome written laudatory article on an exhibition of his works. Painters and sculptors should remember that lasting fame rests on solid merit reached by work, work. Winslow Homer is undoubtedly the greatest living American painter to-day; and up in Maine he labors away, far from the wiles of press-writers, letting his works speak for themselves and for him. One of the most promising of our younger men is Arthur B. Davies, a man of singular modesty and retiring to a fault, without any club pulls, but Davies will some day have a higher rating than many of those that now spend their energy to get before the public by hook and by crook.

After having regarded a well painted picture at a fair distance, one goes nearer in order to study the composition. He will be surprised to see how the images, which appeared so natural at a distance, become strange when viewed closely; not only their form seems altered, but their coloring. Certain delicate tones are no longer perceived; there, where I thought I saw a beautiful and harmonious carnation, I see only a reddish color, striped and crossed with green. The shade of the nose is a chocolate brown. That ear, which appeared pink and transparent, is circled with a blood-red. There are, particularly in the shading and reflections, tones so disappointing that I ask myself how they could have meant so much to me at first. I draw back with surprise. At the instant when I find myself at the proper point of view everything takes on its former appearance. The anamorphosis operates. At the same time that the objects regain their form, they regain their color. What is this mirage? What has happened, when I have only taken a step backward, that all my perceptions should be so modified?

An immediate change is produced in the value of the tones, due to their approach to the retina. Certain tones, divided as I distinctly perceive when close to them, blend at a distance. Certain colored surfaces, of which I saw the true shades when I regarded them separately, take by contrast and reciprocal influence a different value when I regard them at a sufficient distance to have them enter into the field of vision as a whole. This is the painter's chief difficulty. Colors, made to be seen at a distance and comprehended in a single look, must be applied when close, and one upon another. Thence come unexpected effects. Each new touch placed upon the canvas changes its value according to the neighborhood in which it finds itself and modifies the shade of the objects already laid in. It would be vain to attempt to paint the whole canvas at once, or to foresee the effect of the colors, as the painter on china does, who corrects, in advance, the effects of the burning, and paints in false tones in order to obtain just coloring. No matter what practice a painter has had in his art, he experiments, he draws back from time to time, looking with one eye in order to judge of the effect, and returns to his canvas to work again at that point.

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But this is not the most important change which is produced, when, after having regarded the canvas from near, we place ourselves at the true point of view of the picture. That which is truly remarkable is that, at the instance where the perspective illusion is produced, all the tones take a representative value, which seems to be entirely different from their true value. "What a color!" said Delacroix, pointing to a muddy pavement. "Well, if one would say to Paul Veronese, paint a beautiful blonde woman whose complexion shall have that shade, he would do so, and the woman would be a beautiful blonde in his painting." It is that idea on which an artist makes the coloring of an object depend; not only the impression that it makes on the retina, but the conditions under which he knows or believes that it is perceived.

The pictorial illusion changes the apparent conditions of the perception. I do not believe that I perceive the object which the painter places before me in the real light which shines upon the canvas, but in the fictitious light which is supposed to shine in the picture. That which is interpreted to me is entirely different from what I perceive.

For example, I see on the canvas the image of a hand, colored an ugly brown-red, thick and opaque. Now I see that hand in the picture, but I am supposed to perceive it under entirely different conditions; the painter has supposed it to lie in the shadow, in the shimmer of a red drapery which lights it up with a faint reflection. In order that it should not appear, under these conditions, still more brown than it seemed

to me, it is necessary that it should be, in reality, very white, also that I should attribute to it that color as its local tone. Have I entirely lost consciousness of the remainder of my perception—that is to say, of that which remains of the brown color, an abstraction which I have made in order to attribute white to the object? By no means. Everything depends on my interpretation. I have only mentally separated the simple tone which was supplied to me; I have distinguished three colored elements, a flesh color sufficiently light, some pure red and some black. Each of these elements is considered separately and receives a different interpretation. The flesh color is attributed to the hand as its own proper color, that is to say, as the color which it would have and which I would perceive under normal conditions. The red would seem to me the effect of a reflection thrown upon that hand like a delicate varnish; the black would finally represent to me a scattered shade, a sort of somber and transparent atmosphere in which the hand was placed.

In order to reproduce that triple effect, the painter had only to reproduce that exact shade which he had under his eyes. That seems very simple; but, in reality, that is the great difficulty of painting. The novice in painting attempts to reproduce on the canvas the apparent color of objects; he paints, as it is called, the local color. More experienced, he perceives that this mode of representation is defective, and then a reaction against appearances sets in. But a sufficient reaction is difficult, and the mode of coloring which he adopts will be only a compromise between their local tone and the color truly perceived.

But is that very wrong? some one asks. Is not the best means of making me think I perceive nature to reproduce on the canvas that which has a place in my perception? That pretended true color does not seem to me false, because it is only thus that things appear to me. That which I ask of the painter is not that he should show me the things that he perceives with his artist's eye, trained to react against appearances, but just as I, who have not had that special education, see them. No, that is a mistake. The only means of making me feel that nature is represented is to put on canvas the colors which make the same impression on the retina that the objects themselves would make, if you actually produce their apparent image. I do not recognize them; the image which you show me seems incorrect or incomplete. Take, for instance, the case of the hand seen in the shade and colored by reflection. If you paint its local color—that is to say, if you really make it white, I will be surprised to see that it receives neither shade nor reflection, and your painting will seem to me defective; or, if I suppose your interpretation correct, I am forced to explain it in a realistic sense; I mentally give to that hand the color which it should have in order to be so white under such conditions, and then it seems to be strangely livid.

You see, then, that in order to reproduce things exactly as they appear, they must be painted not as we think we see them, but as we really perceive them. The artist should not, then, paint the local tone, but suggest it, in reproducing the resultant shades of the object, perceived under special conditions of light.

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Moosic, Pa., Jan. 8th, 1900.

DEAR SIR: Herewith I beg to hand you \$2.00 to renew my subscription to THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC, which I would not be without for double the money.

Yours very truly,

Ah, my, what favors!

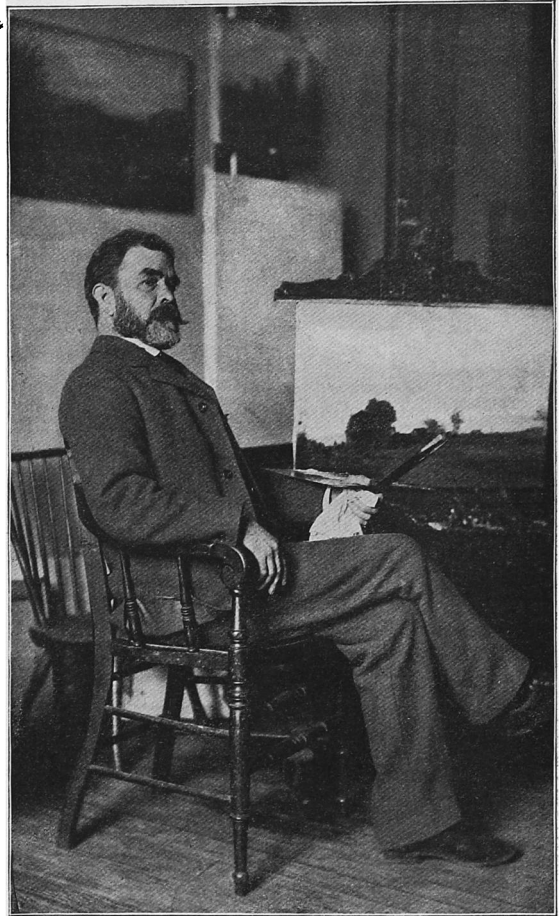
"Praise enough

To fill the ambition of a private man."

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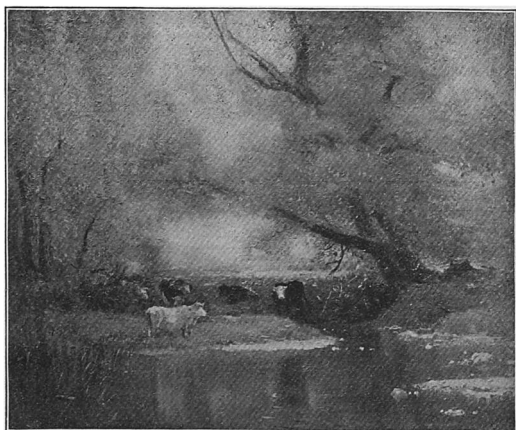
ARTHUR PARTON, N.A.

THERE ARE YET A FEW

WRAPPERS WITH

XXX

PLEASE SEND RENEWAL AT ONCE.



ARTHUR PARTON, N.A.

LANDSCAPE AND CATTLE.

(30x25.)

A conscientious technician, careful of detail, who yet does not lose the spirit in the elaboration of the facts of the scene, is Arthur Parton, the landscape painter. His sympathies are essentially with peaceful rural subjects, the margins of meadow brooks, and the thicketed edges of fields, rather than with the more severe and dignified phases of scenery, although he has painted this latter class with excellent results. Indeed, one of his finest and most effective pictures was a scene upon the Hudson River in midwinter, which had a strong dramatic quality of composition and effect. But it is in the friendly glow of sunlight, or among summer fields mellowed by the shadows of cloud-mottled skies, that he is happiest in his labors. Mr. Parton was born at Hudson, N. Y., in 1842, and studied under William T. Richards in Philadelphia. In 1869 he made a visit to Europe; in 1872 became an Associate of the National Academy, and in 1884 an Academician. He is a member of the American Water Color Society, and has his studio in New York, although he resides in the country and does much of his painting there.

* * *

Theobald Chartran is perhaps the only foreigner whose annual visits to this country for portrait commissions may be condoned for the excellence of his work. With the portraits now exhibited at the Knoedler Gallery there are two canvases of ambitious import. The exhibition picture of "Siegfried" has a good light handling on the whole although the chiaroscuro in detail is far from perfect. The theatrical pose and spectacular composition make it a dramatic *tour de force*.

The historical portrait group, depicting the signing of the protocol of peace between Spain and the United States, at the White House, on August 12, 1898, is of supreme importance. While it is to be regretted that not an American artist was deemed worthy to perpetuate this monumental national incident, we must accept this canvas as a resplendent artistic production, in which the face of the President alone is least satisfactory, it being a good likeness, yet with a somewhat strained expression, but considering the momentous occasion the painter may have been truer to nature than at first thought. The other figures are well high perfect, and the grouping natural and well balanced. The painting is rendered in a subdued key, textures are masterly, the atmosphere of the canvas makes it spacious; the view through the window is well chosen. It is certainly a noteworthy example.

Of the portraits it need only be said that they are in the vein of vitality with which Chartran limns his sitters, although the personality of the artist asserts itself sufficiently to make one forget sometimes the subject for the manner of execution, which is always a defect in portrait painting. Nevertheless these portraits are brilliant examples.

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The Boston Museum has again received a legacy to its vested funds of \$140,000, which, however, will not be available for some time to come.

THE ACADEMY OF DESIGN, OR THE SUCCESSFUL IMITATORS.

A "poor literary feller" who steals part of a plot, borrows a character from one novel and a bit of dialect from another is so quickly pounced upon by the clever public,—let alone the expert critics,—that he is branded as a plagiarist before his lucubrations get outside the city limits.

'Tis marvelous that a jury of artists should be less perspicacious, less discriminating; yet here, in this seventy-fifth exhibition of the work of American artists, there has been no separation of wheat from chaff, no differentiation between the honest personal note, sounded by the few, and that mass of slick and slavish imitation which "fills in."

True, there are those on the walls who have not yet learned, and never will learn, to make wholesale transfers from another man's brush; but what dullard would not, after a walk past the pictures, acquiesce in the fact that much of the show is but a reflection of better work by better men?

Do not the makers of these second-hand pictures ever think that tens of thousands of their observant compatriots yearly go abroad? Are not the Royal Academy and Salon catalogues plentiful, and do not crowds flock to the Luxembourg?

We are a "knowing" race; and just to see how the merest tyro unerringly "spots" the canvases of popular or notorious artists would, it seems to me, be a timely warning to bold poachers, were they less immersed in their own monumental egotism.

The Academy is not in a remote hamlet or listless suburb; and a jury of artists should certainly know as much of what is going on in the art world as a fairly intelligent layman. This jury does not; hence the sooner it awakes from this lethargy the better for all concerned.

Several canvases have perhaps resulted from the impression which one strong artist-mind has made upon weak and worshipping followers. These works bear the imprint of a dominant and dominating painter who, if not present in the flesh, is nevertheless very much *en evidence* in the spirit. He flocks, to-day by himself and opens his show synchronously with the Academy's. The latter hung him in the hall once and now he takes his big revenge, since pupils and followers plant his sturdy oaks, round his massive skies, and impaste his rugged foregrounds all about these walls,—yet they omit the quotation marks.

The ostrich,—stupid bird,—sticks his head in the ground, and trusts the hunter will be blind to his big body. There are a great many ostriches in the present exhibition.

Dessar deserves his prize. It is my misfortune, and, no doubt, my fault, that I can't understand that wiper with a big brush charged with yellow ochre which sweeps across the picture behind the shepherd.

This artist has for years painted a region of his own and with such success that he has *his* style. And now a mushroom-growth has sprung up about him, so that his peculiar method of painting a flock of sheep in a solid phalanx, his shepherd behind the flock, and many a color trait formerly *sui generis*, are here copied with varying degrees of success and deceit by admiring imitators.

All this is not so reprehensible as it is funny; for to think that the modern man and woman have no pictorial memory for lines, subject and color is simply to reckon without your host. Remember what Abe Lincoln said acent fooling people.

Nor have speculations stopped at slight modifications of the popular home-product. Distant studies of foreign friends have been laid under contribution, when an afternoon call has afforded a chance to the 'cute one to filch quite enough to make a rather imposing painting. (And it is an imposition, too.)

These lesser lights do but imitate the more effulgent orbs in the Academy system who themselves are not above using the reflected light of Corot, Courbet, Mauve or Maris whenever they can possibly do so.

What a revelation were it to arrange two large panels with Mauve and Maris heading one and a couple of good Barbizon pictures topping another!

How meekly would the greater part of the present exhibition take its place beneath these captains, the essence of whose genius suffers a gradual dilution all down the line, till finally naught but an insipid decoction remains.

We all recollect,—if we choose to,—how a present-day prominent painter used to array his Corot-like exhibition on the wall of the Twenty-third street building, and that a photograph of them would have baffled "Papa Corot" himself to tell which were his own, which the borrowed plumes. He did not hoodwink all the Academicians, for they joked about it; but the jury passed the copies and the hanging committee gave them a fine place.

What happens when this premium is placed on such vicious practices? Is American art advanced?

Let us, however leave this exotic atmosphere of the forcing-house to go out into the fresh air of individual effort, where men work along their own lines and hold the mirror up to nature.

Murphy, Howe, Coffin, Couse, Crane, Van Laer, and Wiles,—not to name them all,—present their own translation of nature's language.

The foremost of these men is J. Francis Murphy, who,—to employ a musical term,—is playing in as high a key as is compatible with a full and vigorous harmony. His superb drawing and virile handling of line and mass are well exemplified in his one silvery contribution to